

@VAVetBiz NEWS

Your connection to VA OSDBU news, information, and resources | Winter 2017

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Attend an online or community event

#NVSBE2016: Access

Veteran Small Business Owners Converge at National Procurement Event



VOSBs engage, network, and access contracting opportunities at #NVSBE2016 in Minneapolis.

For the sixth year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hosted the **National Veterans Small Business Engagement (NVSBE)**, the largest gathering of its kind geared to the Veteran small business community. NVSBE is VA's premiere event, where Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs) are joined with procurement decision makers (PDMs) and acquisition professionals from VA, other federal agencies, state government, and large firms with small business needs.

On November 1–3, 2016, in Minneapolis, Minn., Veteran small business owners connected with potential buyers in the federal and commercial marketplaces for three full days of engagement which included learning and matchmaking sessions, plenary luncheons, executive roundtables, and other networking events.

With its unprecedented level of access, NVSBE continues to be the most effective way for VOSBs to build relationships with PDMs, contracting specialists, and other small businesses. Early connections made during the Engagement allowed VOSBs to get in front of the right people to capitalize on opportunities for contract awards and subcontracting. *"Thank you also for putting on such a valuable and resourceful conference. Several of us...pondered the positive business relationships that we witnessed this past week. From contractors building teams to networking for business opportunities to simply learning about how to do business—it was simply wonderful!"* said VA Contracting Officer Julie Partridge **[continued on page 2]**. ➤➤

Letter From the Editor



Chanel Bankston-Carter

Greetings! Welcome to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (VA OSDBU) quarterly newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed of VA OSDBU's efforts to connect Veterans to economic opportunity, provide Veterans access to programs and resources, and support those who seek to do business with VA. We hope that @VAVetBiz NEWS has a broad appeal to anyone with interests in the Veteran small business community.

Our first issue brings you the latest updates to the Veterans First Contracting Program, which has recently undergone key changes. It also features highlights from the 2016 National Veterans Small Business Engagement (NVSBE), VA's signature event for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs). Additionally, you will find information about resources and upcoming events relevant to Veteran small business owners. We hope that @VAVetBiz NEWS will become a valuable tool that you can rely on for educational and engaging content.

I believe that you will find the newsletter to be informative and useful as you navigate the rewards and challenges of being a Veteran small business owner. We welcome your feedback as we work to best serve your needs. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Chanel Bankston-Carter
Director for Strategic Outreach and Communications, VA OSDBU

#NVSBE2016: Access

[continued from page 1] NVSBE also allows VOSBs to network and discover potential teaming partnerships. William J. Kirkpatrick, Chief Executive Officer of HMS Technologies, Inc., shared, "The entire conference was absolutely the best we've ever attended and being a T4 NextGen (T4NG) prime contract holder gave us an opportunity to talk to more Veteran-owned business owners about partnering opportunities."

This year's NVSBE also offered VOSBs firsthand knowledge and expert advice on how to do business with VA and other topics relevant to small businesses. In particular, subject matter experts from VA hosted a town hall meeting to discuss updates to the Veterans First Contracting Program and how changes to the VetBiz Vendor Information Pages/VIP database affect the VA Verification process.

Overall, \$1.3 billion in contracts have been awarded to procurement-ready Veteran businesses through connections made at NVSBE.

VA will continue to offer the Veteran small business community access to unique opportunities to foster relationships, expand networking, and potentially secure contract awards by hosting industry-specific access events throughout 2017. If you missed last year's event, be sure to **register for the 2017 NVSBE, December 5–7, in St. Louis, Mo.** For more information about NVSBE, visit www.nvsbe.com. ★



#NVSBE2016 keynote address delivered by former Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Robert A. McDonald



#NVSBE2016 featured award presentations, speeches by top VA officials, learning sessions, leadership roundtables, VOSBs from across the United States, and much more.

★ Why Attend NVSBE? ★

Based on 2015 data, NVSBE provides the most effective way to **directly connect** Veteran-owned and other small businesses with potential buyers in the federal and commercial marketplaces.

188
BUSINESS
OPPORTUNITY
SESSIONS



Learn about current and future procurement requirements at **Business Opportunity Sessions**

Discuss your capabilities and address business requirements directly with contracting specialists at **Networking Tables**

2,129
NETWORKING
TABLES



393
DINING WITH
DECISION MAKERS



Build personal relationships with potential customers and business partners during **Dining with Decision Makers** and Plenary Lunch Sessions

Engage in **One-On-One Matchmaking** to build business alliances and meet prospective business partners

**ONE-ON-ONE
MATCHMAKING**



**INDUSTRY-
SPONSORED
RECEPTIONS**



Expand your networking opportunities at **Industry-Sponsored Receptions**

Gain knowledge and expertise from senior executives on future mission needs during **Executive Roundtables**

12
EXECUTIVE
ROUNDTABLES



24
SENIOR LEADER
ROUNDTABLES



Engage in two-way conversation with senior leaders to discuss practical business action to help meet procurement needs during **Senior Leader Roundtables**

Learn at **Senior Leader Overviews** on program missions and visions for greater access to opportunities

18
SENIOR LEADER
OVERVIEWS



4
GENERAL
SESSIONS



Listen to industry experts speak on a combination of topics surrounding the Veteran small business community during **General Sessions**

Plug into **Learning Sessions** for insight and knowledge from subject matter experts and senior leaders to help improve your small business procurement readiness

99
LEARNING
SESSIONS



**EXPOSITION
HALL**



Showcase products and services in person and connect with a large number of firms in the **Exposition Hall**

#NVSBE2016



Approximately

4000
Attendees

1404

Veteran-Owned
Small Businesses

1804

Small Businesses

300

Large Businesses

339

VA Procurement
Decision Makers

21

Federal Agencies

Veterans First Update: ★★★★★

VA Adheres to Supreme Court Ruling

Did you know...? In response to the **U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Kingdomware Technologies, Inc. v. United States***, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has improved the Veterans First Contracting Program and will continue to do so as needed. The Court determined that the “**Rule of Two**” must be applied to all competitive VA contract awards. The new procedures strengthen and enhance VA’s use of set-asides for **Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs)** and **Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs)** under the unique authority of the Veterans First Contracting Program.



Thomas J. Leney, Executive Director of VA Small and Veteran Business Programs, speaks with SDVOSBs and VOSBs at the #NVSBE2016 Kingdomware Town Hall.

Previously, VA and lower courts interpreted the rule as limited to prospective open market acquisitions. This meant if VA was going to establish an entirely new contract (i.e., solicit new proposals on the open market), the contracting officer would set aside the award to SDVOSBs/VOSBs if there was a reasonable expectation of receiving two or more offers. The ruling extends the Rule of Two analysis to competitive awards against existing contracts, not just open market awards. Adjustments to the Veterans First Contracting Program implement this change to VA’s understanding of the law.

VA is committed to proper implementation of the law and will continue to be inclusive and transparent about its compliance with the Court’s decision. SDVOSBs/VOSBs should be aware of the following key changes to the Veterans First Contracting Program:

- VA’s new acquisition procedures will be applied to all competitive contract actions including those conducted using the Federal Supply Schedules.
- VA contracting officers will look to use set-asides to VA-verified SDVOSBs and VOSBs using the Rule of Two on all competitive contract actions any time prior market research indicates two or more verified SDVOSBs or VOSBs are likely to provide the best value at a fair, reasonable price.
- VA will leverage technology to conduct comprehensive and robust market research to identify procurement-ready SDVOSBs/VOSBs, placing a renewed emphasis on the VA Business Intelligence Tool (VA-BIT).
- VA will provide increased engagement and educational outreach to SDVOSBs/VOSBs, large and small businesses, Veteran service organizations, and stakeholders who may be impacted by the ruling.
- VA is providing ongoing training to our contracting workforce and program staff to ensure proper implementation that will better serve our Veterans and their families.

In order to qualify for participation, SDVOSBs/VOSBs must first be verified through the VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) Center for Verification and Evaluation. VA-verified SDVOSBs/VOSBs are then listed in the VetBiz Vendor Information Pages/VIP database so they are eligible to compete for VA set-aside contracts and sole source awards.

The VA OSDBU website is frequently updated with news, information, and resources. Veteran small business owners can access a dedicated page that details the changes with weekly webinars, presentation slides, and recorded question/answer sessions. SDVOSBs/VOSBs are encouraged to stay informed and take advantage of the unique education and training opportunities provided by VA OSDBU by accessing www.va.gov/osdbu.

As VA improves its best practices, VA OSDBU will continue to offer support and resources to best serve SDVOSBs/VOSBs seeking to do business with VA. ★

About VA OSDBU

Working to Ensure That Veteran-Owned Small Businesses Have Access to Economic Opportunities to Build and Grow

MISSION & VISION

The mission of **VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)** is to enable Veterans to gain access to economic opportunity by leveraging the federal procurement system and expanding participation of procurement-ready small businesses.

This mission will be achieved by changing how Veteran-owned and other small business concerns, that are procurement-ready, gain access to economic opportunities. Current transformation efforts will increase awareness, reduce risk, enhance access, improve procurement mechanisms, and promote better performance in meeting small business goals by 2019.

VA OSDBU will transform how small businesses achieve economic success by leveraging improved technology and business processes to enable procurement-ready small businesses to address relevant procurement requirements in both the federal and commercial markets.

DISCOVER CONTRACTING

Acquisitions and Contracting Support implements and tracks the progress of VA small business goals to ensure that businesses are granted access to contract opportunities; gathers market research; oversees VA subcontracting; provides overall direction on small business program policies and procedures; and works with contracting staff to help small businesses maximize VA procurement opportunities.

EXPLORE VERIFICATION

The **Vets First Verification Program** ensures that set-aside funds are awarded to legitimate firms owned and controlled by Veterans and Service-disabled Veterans. During Verification, SDVOSBs/VOSBs are evaluated and verified according to the tenets found in Title 38 CFR Part 74 that address Veteran eligibility, ownership, and control. In order to qualify for participation in the Veterans First Contracting Program, eligible SDVOSBs/VOSBs must first be verified.

GAIN DIRECT ACCESS

The **Direct Access Program (DAP)** provides SDVOSBs and VOSBs unique opportunities to build partnerships, maximize networking, and gain access to potential customers—*specifically VA Procurement Decision Makers*—through nationwide events. DAP offers direct access to procurement events, networking opportunities, and requirement resources for Veteran-owned and other small businesses interested in doing business with VA.

LEARN ABOUT DOING BUSINESS

Strategic Outreach and Communications (SOC) provides Veteran-owned and other small businesses with awareness, education, and training to help them do business with VA and other federal agencies. SOC works closely with SDVOSBs/VOSBs to help them access programs, resources, and services aimed to increase their participation in the federal marketplace.

Connect With @VAVetBiz!

Gain access to the latest news and resources surrounding the Veteran small business community.



FOLLOW US!



Join our online community of Vetrepreneurs, small business owners, acquisition professionals, contracting specialists, and more.

Most Popular Social Media Campaigns in 2016

As of January 2017



#NVSBE2016

National Veterans Small Business Engagement

 Impressions: 38,313 / Likes: 162 / Retweets: 84

 Reach: 11,206 / Likes: 428 / Shares: 49

HERStory
National Women's
Small Business Month 2016



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs
Office of Small and Disadvantaged
Business Utilization

“

#VoicesofWVOSBs

Set clearly identified goals. Stay positive when everything looks impossible and embrace the Power of No! As a VA-verified WOSB, we believe in our worth and encourage others to embrace their successes.

—Amber Peebles,
President of Athena Construction Group

”

#VoicesofWVOSBs

2016 National Women's Small Business Month

 Impressions: 2,652 / Likes: 17 / Retweets: 5

 Reach: 5,675 / Likes: 60 / Shares: 17

Center for Minority Veterans:

An Advocate for Minority Veterans

By Barbara Ward

The **Center for Minority Veterans (CMV)** plays a significant role in contributing to VA's mission to serve all Veterans. Established by Congress in 1994, CMV advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the adoption and implementation of policies and programs affecting Veterans who are minorities. Barbara Ward was appointed as the Center's director in 2012 and oversees a diverse group of staff members who are passionate about serving minority Veterans.

The Center also provides support to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans, which is composed of minority Veterans with diverse backgrounds and military experience. The committee advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Congress regarding VA's administration of benefits and provisions of health care, benefits, and services to minority Veterans. The committee's annual reports to Congress are available on the CMV website.

Minority Veterans make up 22 percent (5 million) of the Veteran population and approximately 33 percent of the women Veteran population. Based on 2014 projections, the minority Veteran population will continue to increase as the overall Veteran population decreases. CMV is committed to expanding its outreach efforts by conducting workshops and "Lunch and Learn" sessions at federal agencies, participating in stand downs, attending job fairs, and hosting virtual town hall meetings to ensure that minority Veterans are informed of their benefits. These combined activities provide a forum to identify potential barriers to accessing services and address

concerns that impact minority Veterans. They also align with VA's Strategic Plan and key MyVA initiatives that focus on improving the Veteran experience.



CMV has oversight of approximately 240 Minority Veteran Program Coordinators who conduct ongoing targeted outreach, nationwide, in local communities. CMV also collaborates with many partners who represent the interests of minority Veterans, including Veterans service and faith-based organizations and non-governmental agencies.

A major CMV initiative is to increase the number of minority Veterans enrolled in VA's Million Veteran Program. Minorities are less likely to participate in medical research, despite the impact chronic health conditions can have on underserved communities in terms of life, high mortality rates, and healthcare costs. CMV is committed to working with the VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization to identify barriers and strategies that will have a positive impact on promoting procurement opportunities for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses in the minority Veteran community.

Veterans may contact CMV at 202-461-6191. Visit www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans for more information and to subscribe for updates. ★

Barbara Ward serves as the principal adviser to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on the adoption and implementation of policies and programs affecting Veterans who are minorities. One of her major responsibilities is to make recommendations to the Secretary, Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, National Cemetery Administration, and other interdepartmental offices for the establishment or improvement of VA programs for which Veterans who are minorities are eligible. She also serves as the Designated Federal Officer of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans. The Center for Minority Veterans has oversight of the Minority Veteran Program Coordinators Program ensuring that targeted outreach activities are conducted nationwide for minority Veterans, including Asian American, Pacific-Islander, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Alaskan Native Veterans.



Barbara Ward



Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
December 6, 2016



Women Veteran Attendees

Upcoming Events

Whether online or in your community, our events can help you build and grow your small business.
Gain access via **VA OSDBU Events Calendar** at www.va.gov/osdbu/library/events.asp.

Webinars: Doing Business With VA

Topic	Date/Time (EST)
Overview	March 6, April 3: 2–3 p.m.
Awareness	March 8, April 12: 2–3 p.m.
Risk Mitigation	March 2, April 6: 10–11 a.m.
Access	March 22, April 22: 2–3 p.m.
Procurement Mechanisms	March 9, April 13: 10–11 a.m.
Performance	March 13, April 10: 2–3 p.m.
Writing Effective Capability Statements	March 1, April 5: 2–3 p.m.
Women-Owned Small Businesses Real Talk	March 20, April 17: 2–3 p.m.
Veteran HUBZone Small Businesses	March 16, April 20: 10–11 a.m.

Webinars: Verification Program

Topic	Date/Time (EST)
Preparing for Reverification	March 7, April 4: 2–3 p.m.
How to Stay Verified	March 28, April 25: 2–3 p.m.
Pre-Application	March 3, 10, 17, 24: 2–3 p.m. April 7, 14, 21, 28: 2–3 p.m.

Outreach and Training Events

VA's National Broker Service Contract Industry Day

March 1, Washington, D.C.

Hosted by VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management
for SDVOSBs/VOSBs in NAICS Codes 531210 and 531390.

Tri-State Procurement and Economic Development Conference

March 8, Hannibal, Miss.

Learning sessions hosted by the Missouri, Iowa, and
Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Centers.

Boots to Business Reboot March 3, Suffern, N.Y.

Two-step training program, open to Veterans and their spouses,
with overview of business ownership, planning, and more.

Alliance Northwest March 9, Puyallup, Wash.

Government contracting training and outreach to network
with agency representatives and explore subcontracting.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

Call Center: 1–866–584–2344 ★ **Web:** www.va.gov/osdbu ★ **Email:** osdbu@va.gov